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THE FAITH OF LUTHERANISM

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Because of frequent discussion in which the tendency is shown to stress the confessional documents at the expense of what we mean by the Faith of our Church as a whole, it is well to get away for a moment from the emphasis on, and the distinction between, the individual documents. It has been objected that in some of the confessional writings, there are matters that cannot claim to be confessional substance, as, for instance, when Melancthon in the Apology counts three sacraments (Baptism, Supper and Repentance), or when Luther speaks of the pope as the antichrist, or when he says that those who do not want to learn the Catechism are to be driven from the country. And generally there are historical and exegetical statements which our age has outgrown. But such matters do not disturb us, simply because they do not belong to "the Faith" of our Church.

Our interest is in the Faith, as expressed by the Confessions. We may also choose the singular and speak of "*the* Confession" as Luthardt was in the habit of doing. The Allgemeine Evangelisch Lutherische Konferenz established itself simply upon *the Confession* of Lutheranism. It will have been noticed that the United Lutheran Church in the latest edition of the Ministerial Acts addresses the candidate for ordination simply with this question: "Will you preach and teach the pure Word of God in accordance with '*the Confession*' of the Evangelical Lutheran Church?" And precisely the same form is used in the installation service of the Ministerial Acts.

It must be understood, of course, that the question as to what is the Faith of our Church must be referred to

the very documents enumerated in the constitution of the United Lutheran Church. But in many individual cases it calls for the most discriminating judgment of a sane progressive-conservative theology to state what on the basis of the confessional principle and in the light of our present knowledge, must be the content of the Evangelical Lutheran Faith.

There is a thought that should at least be touched upon in this connection because it contributes to completing the idea which was stressed, namely *the Faith* of our church in the Confessions. This Faith, let us say, is expressed not only in the officially recognized Symbols, but also in our liturgical formulas, especially in the forms for ministerial acts, and also to a considerable extent in our hymnology and in the devotional literature of our church.

THE CONFESSIONS OF FAITH AS AN INNER NECESSITY

Christianity has a certain definite message for preaching and teaching, and for inspiring the life of the Church. We do not agree with the men who talk disparagingly of Christian doctrine and can become enthusiastic only when speaking of the Christian life. It is in the doctrines of the Church that the principles of Christian ethics are found. Surely it is the *teaching* of Rome that produces the peculiar life of that church. And the distinctive ethics of the Lutheran Church is the natural result of her doctrinal principles. Even the differences in practical church life between Lutheranism and Calvinism must be traced to differences in doctrinal conceptions. The doctrinal principles of Modernism also are bound to develop a corresponding ethics. A wrong conception of God will produce defects in the ideals of the Christian life. A Pelagian and a Semi-pelagian teaching on sin and salvation makes for legalism and humanism in ethics.

The doctrinal content of Christianity was bound to work itself out in forms of expression. The early Church

is an illustration of this historical fact. Everywhere in the East and in the West the local churches were active in creating a "Rule of Faith." Thus we have the Creed of Antioch, the Creed of Caesarea, the Creed of Jerusalem, the "Old Roman Symbol", and gradually, by more universal recognition, the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed. These creeds were not arbitrary formulations of speculating Theologians, but creations of an inner necessity. They served as means for mutual recognition, as tests for admission into membership and for protecting the Church against inroads of heresies which were trying her life.

When, after long centuries of departure into grave errors regarding the way of salvation, finally, the Reformation came, there was the same impulse for expressing creedally the fundamentals of the purified faith. An example of it may be seen in Luther's "Confession of Faith" of the year 1528, where he goes into details on all the interests of the Reformation, doctrinal and practical.¹ Luther introduces this Confession with the following words: "I will here in detail and in writing confess before God and all the world the faith which I propose to hold until death, and in which (so help me God) I propose to depart from this world and to appear before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ." This Confession never became a public Confession of Lutheranism and therefore has not become generally known in our Church.

About the time when Luther wrote this Confession of Faith, one year before the Marburg Colloquy, there was an impulse on every hand to crystallize into creedal statement the faith of the Reformation. It was the year when Luther's Catechisms appeared. In the next year we have the Schwabach and the Marburg Articles, and less than a year later the Augsburg Confession, the magna charta of Protestantism. Zwingli also addressed a "profession of faith" on "True and False Religion" to Charles V. The

1 K. Graul, *Distinctive Doctrines*, reedited by R. Seeberg and translated from the 12th edition by D. M. Martens, Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern.

South German Cities (or "Upper Germans"), under the lead of Martin Bucer, formulated their "Confessio Tetrapolitana." Six years later (1536), in an endeavor to unite the South German and even the followers of Zwingli with the Lutherans, the Wittenberg Concord was drafted. It was the result of the untiring union endeavours of Martin Bucer, the theological predecessor of Calvin.

Even the Formula of Concord was a historical necessity. After the passing away of Luther there came a time of serious misunderstandings between his followers. The "Flacianists" stood opposed to the "Melanchthonians", and there were other conflicts. It was at this time that the influence of Calvin began to be felt in Germany. At first he was taken by many as an "Upper-German Lutheran" and as being in harmony with the Wittenberg Concord. But gradually he was discovered to be one that had taken over the mediating theology of Martin Bucer, developing it into a system such as in his "Institutes."

Here the paragraph on the Lord's Supper in the Wittenberg Concord, in which Luther had gone to the limit in making concessions, was brushed aside. The position was taken that, after ascension, the human nature of Christ is confined locally to the "Right Hand of God" in heaven and that as man, Christ cannot be really present in the Supper. The spiritual presence in His divinity was stressed.

Beginning with an attack of Joachim Westphal upon Calvin (1552) a controversy arose that continued for centuries and finally dropped into the background only because the conflicting positions had become clear to both sides and were taken as matters of fact. The conflict was inevitable. Kawerau says of that much criticised step of Westphal: "If he had not done it someone else would".² It opened the eyes of the Lutherans to the silent propaganda for Calvinism in the Lutheran Germany of that day. Soon the results of that propaganda were seen. The Palatinate was lost, and the Lutherans came near losing

2 Hauck, *Prot. R. E.* XXI, 186,60.

Saxony also. The Heidelberg Catechism was published. Bremen, Nassau, Anhalt, Hesse-Cassel, Lippe, followed the Palatinate in the adoption of Calvinism. The conversion of Elector Sigismund of Brandenburg especially was an event of the most serious consequences. It gave to German Protestantism the union problem in a form in which the Scandinavian countries and also England and America have never had it.

It was in this struggle of Lutheranism for self-preservation at the end of the sixteenth and during part of the seventeenth century, that the Formula of Concord was developed, matured and introduced. So we see that the Formula of Concord also came into existence as an inner necessity for the life of the Church.

THE CHARGE OF A STATIONARY CREED AND OF A STAGNANT THEOLOGY

Lutherans particularly are said to believe in "unalterable" Confessions, and for this reason to lack in theological progressiveness. On this matter there is much misunderstanding in quarters outside of our communion. Our historical emphasis upon the "unaltered" edition of the Augsburg Confession of 1530-31 (as contrasted with the "Variata" editions of 1540 ff.) does not mean that in principle we would have to be opposed to amplifying or even changing our Confession. That conflict and the consequent employing of the term "unaltered" was nothing but a protest against the alteration of historic Lutheranism by the introduction of certain "crypto-Calvinistic" and "Philipistic" principles.³

What is it in Lutheranism that has invited the criticism which makes the charge of a stationary creed and a stagnant theology? It is our historical conservatism with regard to tradition, out of which also there flows a certain appreciation of the Church's creed.

Lutherans, following the great Reformer, have refused

³ J. L. Neve, *Introduction to the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church*, pp. 101-111.

to be radical in estimating the Church's tradition so much over-emphasized by Rome. First of all, we see a fundamentally normative significance for the estimation of Christian doctrine in the religious conceptions of the apostolic age, as reflected in the New Testament literature. Furthermore, we see something peculiar about the creed-making ages in the history of the Church. The Holy Spirit cannot have been absent from the life of the Church, according to the promise of Christ (John 14:26; 15:26). In their insight into the Scriptures these fundamental epochs of the Church were prophetically creative. The struggle with fundamental errorists kept the eye of the Church keen. The insight into truth was deep, prophetic. There was intense religious experience.

Let it be repeated: the great creeds of history are not arbitrary creations of speculating theologians. The truth was prayed and sung in the churches before it received its formulation. The theologians were only the organs for expressing the faith of the congregation of believers.⁴ Why is it that Modernism which speaks so much of religious experience has so little appreciation of the experience of the Christian Church?

And yet, high as we estimate the historical Confessions of our Church we would not wish to make them infallible. The Word of God only, as expressed by Scripture, is infallible. And it is in the light of this Word that the Church of every age must re-examine her confessional literature. If in so doing she should gradually come to the conviction that her religious experience has expanded and deepened to such an extent that she is ready for a restatement of the fundamental truths of Christianity then there is *in principle* no objection to such a step.

One must not, however, be too optimistic as to the ability of any age to make a new creed. The Augsburg Confession in its first article, was able to say: "Our churches, with *common consent*⁵ do teach." Could we hope for any such unanimity in this present day? There

⁴ Seeberg, *History of Doctrine*, 2d and 3d ed., Intro. to Vol. I.

⁵ *Magno consensu*.

is something peculiar about a creed-making age. Usually such an age is inaugurated by revolutionary experiences such as took place in the time of the Reformation. It is marked by a depth of religious insight into Scripture and by a common intensity of conviction of which we see little in our own so very much distracted and materialistic age. The best therefore that we can do is to recognize the old Confessions and interpret them historically, distinguishing between the confessional substance in them and their accidental or transient features. And then, in our interpretation of them we can add and contribute all we want of the further experiences of divine truth, which the Lord of the Church is giving us.

This we have been doing! The theology of the Lutheran Church has been truly progressive. He who denies that needs to study the history of Protestant Theology, not merely the history of the liberalistic tendencies and movements, but the history of Protestant Theology, including the development of conservative theology.⁶

Even the much decried seventeenth century, far from being an age of doctrinal stagnation, brought remarkable progress, especially in developing the Order of Salvation. Further, we have in our theology a development of the idea of the "mystical union," the teaching on the life of the believer with Christ. On this, there has been a rich fructification from great pietistic movements of which a large treasure of the best thought has crystallized into liturgy, song and devotional literature. An immense contribution to a truly doctrinal development has been rendered by the interpretation of our catechism during the centuries since the Reformation. The contribution to eschatology has been considerable. The controversies of the last century in Germany and America, which were stimulated by the reaction against Rationalism and the Union, left to the Lutheran Church a large deposit of sane theology.

6 There is food for thought and disagreement along this line in the remarks by E. C. Moore, *History of Christian Thought since Kant*, 1912, p. 213.

This theology in Germany and America has been taken to be more or less a mere "repristination" or a revival of the theology of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, but it surely has included much progressive development. And it was a practical, workable theology! One test of the practical religious character of this theology lies in the many works on Ethics, which it has produced, especially in Germany; another test must be seen in the large sermonic and devotional literature that sprang up on the basis of this theology.

Has the theology of the Lutheran Church been lacking in progressiveness? We only need to be reminded of the many works on Dogmatics and Ethics that have been appearing during the last few decades, especially on the other side of the Atlantic: Luthardt, Kaehler, von Oettingen, Schaeder, Hausleiter, Ihmels, Seeberg, Girgensohn, Stange, Bachman, Elert. I admit that some of our recent writers have ventured too much in making concessions to the new theology. But whatever objections there may be particulars, there surely is a real grappling with the problems of this modern age. All the results of modern scholarship have been most carefully considered. The investigations of these theologians are conducted with due regard to all the border subjects of theology: history of philosophy, psychology, religious psychology, comparative religion, philosophy of religion.

Opposed to the theology on the basis of the faith of Lutheranism and conservatism in general, stands the theology of "Modernism" or "Liberalism." It is a new kind of theology that has been developing along a line of schools emanating from the "left wing" of Schleiermacher in Germany and from Coleridge in England.⁷ Even if we take the most modern of the Lutheran theologians mentioned there is a fundamental difference between these and the representatives of "Modernism."

In a nutshell it is this: These modern Lutherans are established on the fundamental principles of the Faith of

⁷ For details see J. L. Neve in *The American Lutheran Survey*, Mar. and Apr., 1927.

Lutheranism as expressed in the "oecumenical" creeds and in the symbols of the Lutheran Reformation, while the followers of "Modernism" have abandoned the confessional heritage and laid altogether new foundations. The Liberalists in Germany go under the name "Neuprotestantismus." In America the followers of this school speak of a "new reformation" being under way.⁸ It is not just this or that feature of the old conservative theology (miracles, virgin birth, verbal inspiration) that they reject, but they want us to admit the "errancy of the system." The whole system of conservative theology as resting upon a supernatural revelation and a religion of redemption is to be thrown overboard and to be substituted by a purely ethical "religion", divorced from doctrine.⁹

SOME PRACTICAL FEATURES IN THE CONFESSIONAL INTEREST OF OUR CHURCH

In creeds and confessions many can see nothing but abstract doctrine and theoretical interest. And yet they serve very practical interests in the life of the Church.

1 In the Confessions, the Church of Christ is satisfying the deeply-rooted need of Christians *to distinguish for practical helpfulness between fundamentals and non-fundamentals in theology*. All Confessions aim to state what is fundamental. Christian people want to know what is fundamental and essential.

2 *The fundamentals, as stated in the Confessions, have indicated to succeeding generations the foundation of truth upon which further development should take place*. Liberalism tears down and wants to lay new foundations. By this it becomes radicalism, frequently against its own intentions. We want to be "conservatives", which means that we feel the need to look upon

8 Cf. R. Seeberg on the future of this "new reformation" in his *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Vol. IV, p. 943 ff.

9 For the points of cleavage see *The American Lutheran Survey*, Mar., 1927.

the creeds of the ancient Church and of the Reformation as experiences of the Church, arrived at through the continued work of the Holy Spirit in the Church. So we look upon our Confessions as guides. They are not necessarily the last word. But we build upon the heritage of the past and seek for further truth. Luther, when rejecting the Roman errors, re-established himself and our church upon the "oecumenical" creeds, and upon this basis he made new contributions. Every age should try to make a contribution to further truth by a deeper understanding of Scripture. In this way our dogmaticians should develop from generation to generation. We should not demand a stagnant theology. But all the sane development must be upon foundations laid in the ancient Creeds and in the Confessions of the Reformation.

3 *Creedally formulated truth has meant much for the pulpit.* By the confessions, the preacher of the Word has been helped to distinguish between truth and error, between fundamentals and non-fundamentals. He has also been helped to see problems for the future and to watch their discussion in the theology of the Church with an open mind. In what a chaos of opinions would our pulpit move if there were not the directing thoughts of our confessional literature! What a help there is just in the terminology and in the categories of the Creeds! We are living by these historical thoughts and by this religious experience, scarcely being conscious of it.

4 *In religious instruction, moreover, the Catechism has proved itself to be indispensable as a directing agency.* What a channel for fundamental religious thought there is in the Small Catechism of Luther! Who could count the influences that the teaching of this little book has exercised over the hearts of men!

Recently a minister of the "Free Protestant" group, who had made his own catechism for religious instruction, said to the writer that one of the first lessons that he was driving home before his catechumens was this: We have nothing to do with the Old Testament, it is the religion of the Jews. But it is in the Old Testament, in

the first chapter of Isaiah, where we read words such as the following: "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be like crimson, they shall be as wool." Who would want to lose such passages from his Bible? A ministry that keeps itself under the guide of the confessional experience of our church is not apt to fall into such departures from Christian teaching.

5 In our services of the sanctuary we are helped by our liturgical forms, which express a wonderful religious wealth of devotional thought. If occasionally the sermon should not be at its best there is this richness of the liturgy that does not allow the congregation to go empty. *But do we give sufficient weight to the fact that these liturgical expressions in our hymn books and in our "Ministerial Acts" are built upon the confessional literature of the Church?*

We would not say, of course, that in every hymn of our Common Service Book we have the faith of our Church, and that hymnological expression can be compared with the crystallized and the concentrated form of the publicly recognized Confessions. There are hymns that cannot claim to go beyond what the Roman Catholic Church would call "Pious Opinion." But among those that we are singing and especially in those that we use much there are some that have been wonderful means of communicating to souls the fundamentals of our Faith. We think of such as "Jesus, lover of my soul," "Rock of ages cleft for me", "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness." It is told of the first hymns of the Reformation that they were one of the most effective means of spreading the Faith of that great new movement.

SPECIAL TRAITS OF LUTHERANISM THE DIRECT RESULT OF ITS CONFESSIONAL PRINCIPLES

We have seen that the Confessions are serving truly practical interests of the Church. Let us now see how

the principles of these documents have worked themselves out in giving to our church a character that makes us more or less distinct in the family of denominations.

It is on the basis of her doctrine of justification by faith that the Lutheran Church is fundamentally opposed to all atomizing or splitting up of Christian ethics. She rejected that Roman distinction between a *higher* Christian life that should be lived by clerics and ascetics and a *lower* Christian life that will do for laymen. She took the position that Christian ethics as flowing out of justification by faith is a whole, that in addition to love which is the fulfillment of the Law, the Holy Scriptures have no commandment, and that the things which God has commanded are the duty of every Christian, be he layman or clergyman.

This again gave new emphasis to the thought, expressed in Article XVI of the Augsburg Confession, that marriage, instead of being a lower state of the Christian life, is a sacred institution from which also the ministry should not be barred. Thus the parsonage was established with the streams of blessing that have been flowing from it into society.

And in line with this thought stands the other idea that *the state*, independent of the Church, is a God-appointed institution. From this followed the demand for obedience to the government with the establishment of the principle in Article XVI of the Augsburg Confession on Civil Affairs, "that it is right for Christians to bear civil office, to sit as judges, to determine matters by the imperial and other existing laws, to award just punishments, to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers, to make legal contracts, to hold property, to make oath when required by the magistrates." All this goes against the Anabaptists in that day, and finds application to the Covenanters, Quakers and Mennonites of a later day.

We are speaking on the question how the doctrine of justification by faith works itself out in the Christian life, and we have just seen how the unity of Christian ethics, resulting from justifying faith as the driving

motive, gives us the evangelical conception of the family and the state.

There is another trait in the religious life of Lutheranism—and here we should say of conservative Protestantism in general—which appears as a result from the doctrine of justification by faith. It is expressed in the Church as the Congregation of Saints and *the priesthood of all believers*.

Justification as the experience of an act of God, in which sin is forgiven and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the repenting and believing sinner, puts man into a personal relation with God. He feels himself as a Christian and then he looks for fellowship with other Christians. Thus we arrive at the Church “as a congregation of believers.” It is here that the “Gospel is to be rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered” (A. C. Art. VIII). Rome, by emphasizing that justification is a gradual process of healing through the sacraments in the hands of the Church as a hierarchical institution, keeps the soul in a state of dependence: the continued infusion of grace can be had only by submission to the power of the keys as administered by the hierarchy, independent of the congregation of believers. But in the Lutheran Church the believer goes direct to the throne of grace. We have no priests and bishops as an order with an indelible character, received at the ordination; but those that are appointed to help us are only ministers for the administration of Word and Sacrament, “regularly called,” of course, for the sake of good order in the Church (A. C. Art. XIV).

So we have the priesthood of all believers in the local congregation. No human beings can shut us out from salvation, if on the basis of justification by faith we know that God owns us. And this priesthood of all believers opens up before every member of the congregation a great field for service in his immediate surroundings. We call it Inner Missions. Those who have had occasion to study it in Lutheran lands have received a deep impression of the fact that Lutheranism is not behind

the Reformed Churches in "Social Service" or in the works of saving love.

From these results of a more derived nature, we may now proceed to a result for the Christian life that follows in an immediate way from the doctrine of justification by faith. We have in mind *the assurance of salvation for the individual soul and the joy which this experience brings to the heart of the believer*. To the Lutheran, the assurance of forgiveness in the experience of justification is not conditioned upon the degree of holiness, to which he may attain, but upon the divinely sealed promise to the repenting sinner. It rests upon the Gospel. This alone gives real assurance as Luther found in his own experience. Here is the constantly flowing source of the joy of our salvation. We have an echo of it in the great historical hymns of our church, such as "*Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein*," "*Ich habe nun den Grund gefunden*," "*Ist Gott fuer mich, so trete gleich alles wider mich*."

It was this consciousness of the assurance of salvation that made the Lutheran Church from the beginning a singing church. It even puts its stamp upon the whole social life in music, song, play and human fellowship. The picture of Luther in the circle of his family is a familiar one: Melanchthon present as a guest, the children around the table, and Luther himself with a musical instrument in his hand. With this picture compare, on the one hand, the Roman Catholic monk in his cell and, on the other hand, that picture of the stern Calvin presiding over that council of moral censors in the city of Geneva. The Danish bishop Martensen in his "Christian Ethics", pictures a characteristic difference between Calvin and Luther. He remarks: Calvin always lived in the most beautiful parts of God's creation: in Southern France, in Strasburg, in Geneva, near the Alps, but never do we find in his letters a reference to the beauties of nature by which he was constantly surrounded. Luther lived in Thuringia, but again and again he breaks out into notes of jubilee over the natural

beauties of his home land. Once he exclaimed:¹⁰ "God gives one whom He loves a home in Thuringia." Luther's sense of beauty and humor has contributed mightily to making Germany that country of art and song and music for which it is known by the traveler. Luther, as we know him from the *Table Talks*, was a classical exponent of that untranslatable word *Gemueth*. Calvin, near the end of his life, praised his good wife, because she had never disturbed him in his studies. Luther tells the story, that his wife—"Herr Kaethe"—made him rock the baby, and we are told that while he obeyed he composed one of the most beautiful Christmas songs of which we know—"Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her."

But there is also *another strain*, constantly asserting itself in the subconsciousness of the life of our Church, which is not a note of optimism but a note of pessimism. This note of pessimism has its root in the Lutheran conception of sin, as a natural depravity and as a condition of our race. We see this "pessimistic" trait of Lutheranism when it comes to expecting much from outward measures: organization, legal enactments, ethical drives.¹¹ Other churches, trained by the influences from Zwingli, Calvin, Knox and the social reformers of today, are full of optimism that by invading the field of politics they will be able to create a world that will practically represent the millenium.

In the light of what has been said it should now be clear that the Faith of our Church as expressed in our Confessions and reflected in our liturgical and devotional literature is not something dead, but that it consists of living principles that have been producing and are constantly reproducing our life as a historic church of Christendom.

10 "Wen Gott lieb hat dem giebt er ein Haus in Thueringen."

11 This state of mind is expressed in those articles of the confessional literature, which dwell with most serious reflection upon the natural depravity of unregenerated man. Cf. Art. II of the Augsburg Confession and the corresponding articles in Apology, Smalkald Articles and the Formula of Concord. Luther himself, in many places of his writings, has reflected in classical statements this trait of his church.

CAN WE RECOGNIZE A RECONSTRUCTION OF OUR CHRISTIAN RELIGION?

Have we come to a time for reconstruction of what the Church has believed to be the Christian Religion? This is the assertion of Modernism. Can we agree with that? What is the situation?

On the basis of a growing apprehension of Scripture truth the Church has gradually arrived at certain fundamental conceptions of religion. We have preached a transcendent as well as an immanent God in the holiness of His being, "almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." We have spoken of man in the sinfulness of his race, and we have characterized this sinful condition, out of which the individual sins are flowing, as a distinct responsibility. Realizing the need of a reconciliation of God to man we have looked upon the perfect life and the substitutionary death of Christ, the incarnated Son of God, as the only means for the redemption of humanity. Finally, we have taken the regeneration of the individual soul to be a supernatural creative act of the Holy Spirit, and upon this basis we have arrived at an "order of salvation," which has given us direction in the teaching of our catechumens and in the preaching of our pulpits. Now we are told that this historical "form of sane words", as we would risk to call it, has been fundamentally wrong, and that the whole system has to be recast.

The objection of Modernism is not merely to the theological form, but to the very substance of the historical Faith. In its conception of God this new teaching lays the emphasis upon the divine immanence, frequently to such a degree that one might be almost tempted to paraphrase it by saying: Man has created God in his own image, in the image of man he has created Him. The sinful inclination of the race, the constantly productive factor of sin as an actual guilt of the individual, is minimized: it is no real depravity; as a condition it is not drawing condemnation; not necessitating the redemption through the death of Christ. A substitutionary atone-

ment is rejected. Christ was not the God-man in the meaning of the historic Faith of the Church, but He was a man who became "divine" and then functioned as the "revealer of God". Regeneration is fundamentally a process of reform, in which man, in the full freedom of his will, is the sovereignly acting agent. Christianity loses the redemptive character and becomes a moralistic religion. It is defined as being fundamentally a "way of living", a "new way of living."

We admit, of course, that there will be progress in the forms of theological expression and in the materials of discussion. We do not use all the categories and the same language as did the men of the seventeenth century. We have simplified our expression by conforming ourselves more to the language of Scripture. We have even felt an influence of the legitimate element in humanism as a moulding factor upon our way of expressing ourselves upon doctrinal differences. Symbolics does not have that "damnatory" language which characterized this branch of theology in centuries gone by, simply because it has given way to historical methods of approach.¹² Psychology has taught us to judge of opposing doctrinal positions differently from what was done by the Wittenberg theologians of the seventeenth century.¹³ To mention but one instance, we have gradually lost sight of such a thing as the "exorcism" which was introduced by Luther and so strongly defended by the seventeenth century Lutherans. Furthermore, Dogmatics, in the Lutheran Church of today, moves in altogether different forms of discussion than did the Dogmatics of Schmid, which was the celebrated text-book in Lutheran schools some fifty years ago. This book will always have its value because it has objectified the best that was delivered to us by the seventeenth century. But compare this book with the Dogmatics of Martensen or, still better, with the last book of C. E. Luthardt, *Der*

¹² Cf. J. I. Neve, *Lutherans in the Movements for Church Union*, 1921, p. 84.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

Christliche Glaube gemeinverstaendlich dargestellt, or with A. von Oettingen, and you receive an impression of how Lutheran Dogmatics has kept up with the problems of its own day. And now we have the books of E. Schaefer, R. Seeberg, K. Girgensohn, C. Stange, and of W. Elert, which are still more modern in their expression.¹⁴

In all these works we have a discussion upon the background of a Christianity which has gone through the most trying conflicts. There was a conflict that came with the scientific discoveries and with the enthronement of empiricism in philosophy. There came the time when philosophy refused to be the "hand-maid of theology". And then we have had successively the philosophical systems of Descart, of Kant and of Hegel. Of the issues that were raised by these systems the men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had no idea. The necessity of dealing with these new issues has given to our present-day dogmatics a rather modern appearance. We see the difference in the defensive language, in the formulation of issues, in the relating of the old confessional statements to the modern situations, in the use of Scripture in the light of what we have learned in the schools of Biblical introduction and of Biblical philology, in the regard that is had to Christian psychology, in the adjusting of the experience of the individual Christian and that of the Church to the testimony of Scripture. But in the main, these modern dogmaticians, although they embarrass us occasionally, do not attack the old faith; on the contrary, they want to preserve the fundamentals and even the essential matters in the periphery that support these fundamentals.

But even the modern theologians of our church do not satisfy the Modernists because of the conservatism which they maintain throughout. These progressive conservatives refuse to sacrifice the fundamentals. They do not wish to ignore the history of the Church. They desire to develop theology on the basis of or in constant touch with

14 Lutherans in America would not be ready to adopt all the positions here taken.

the confessional principles of the ancient Church and the Church of the Reformation. And a large number of theologians in England and in America have established themselves on this same position.

Can we yield to that persistent demand for a fundamental reconstruction of the Christian religion? Where shall we go for a criterion? The conservatives will never be ashamed to appeal to the Scriptures as authority. In Rom. 12:6 Paul admonishes: "Let us prophesy according to the proportion (or analogy) of Faith."

What are we to understand by this "analogy of the faith"? Grundtvig and others have seen the essence of the Apostles Creed in the New Testament. There have been very interesting investigations of this subject.¹⁵ Feine has even risked a reconstruction of this creedal material in the New Testament. It is part of the Apostolic Tradition, a very essential part of the living Apostolic Word out of which the New Testament has grown. It is inseparable from the "Rule of Faith" and from the "Baptismal Formula" in the early Church.

We are told that Christian experience should be guide and criterion. But we cannot read of this whole creedal development in the early Church, all these formulas for the profession of the faith at baptism in Jerusalem, in Caesarea, in Alexandria, at Rome without feeling that in those trying conflicts with Gnosticism, Ebionitism, Arianism, and later with Pelagianism and Semi-pelagianism, the Church of Christ had a great and a very comprehensive experience. So we are justified in adding this great doctrinal experience to that "analogy of the faith" by which the Church is to be guided in her preaching and teaching.

And surely, in the Reformation the Church has had an experience of a special character. The ancient Church exhausted itself in discussing the Trinitarian and the

15 See R. Seeberg, *Dogmengeschichte*, 2d ed. I, p. 66; cf. J. L. Neve, *Introduction to the Symbolical Books*, 2d. ed. 1926, p. 45 f. See especially Paul Feine in his recent book, *Die Gestalt des Apostolischen Glaubensbekenntnisses in der Zeit des neuen Testaments*.

specifically Christological problems, but it did not give us a Scriptural doctrine of man's salvation. Neither did the medieval age succeed in giving the answer to that burning question as to the way and the order of salvation. But in the depth of his soul Luther experienced the whole problem of soteriology and became the exponent of what was in the hearts of many. In this great experience of the Reformation we see another element of the analogy of the Faith.

We do not say that all of the truth had exhausted itself in the Reformation. The Church of Christ, if it is a truly living Church, will continue to grow through a deepening of the comprehension of Scripture.

Are we to look for a "new Reformation?" Our answer is: We must continue to grow, but growth and further development must be on the foundations of the testimony of the apostles and upon the shoulders of our Fathers.